THE

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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *Auguſt* the 30th, 1753.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

THAT you may know who it is that offers you his correſpondence, and how qualified I am to make a figure in the WORLD, I ſhall let you into the ſecret of my birth and hiſtory.

I HAVE the honour to be deſcended from the ancient family of the LIMBERTONGUES in Staffordſhire. My grandfather was of the cabinet with Oliver Cromwell; but unfortunately happening to whiſper a ſecret of ſome importance to his wife, the affair unaccountably became public, and ſentence of diſmiſſion was immediately paſſed upon him. My father was decypherer to king William.

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It was by his diligence and addreſs that the aſſaſſination plot and ſome other combinations in that reign were brought to light. But being ſomewhat too officious in his zeal, he was ſuſpected of betraying the ſecrets of his office (the better, as is ſuppoſed, to inſinuate himſelf into thoſe of the oppoſition) and was diſcarded with diſgrace. With a fortune barely ſufficient for ſupport, he retired to his native village in Staffordſhire; and ſoon after marrying the daughter of an unbeneficed clergyman in the neighbourhood, he had iſſue male, the writer of this letter.

My earlieſt infancy gave indications of an inquiſitive mind; and it was my father's care to implant in me, with the firſt knowledge of words, an inſatiable deſire to communicate. At twelve years old, I diſcovered the frailty of a maiden aunt, and brought the curate of the pariſh into diſgrace. A young lady of uncommon diſcretion, who boarded in the family, was ſo delighted with the ſtory, that ſhe made me a party in all her viſits, to give me new occaſions of relating it: but happening one evening to ſteal a little abruptly upon the retirement of this lady, I diſcovered her in the prettieſt familiarity imaginable with the harlequin of a ſtrolling company.

It was about this time that a fever carried my mother to her grave. My father for ſome weeks was inconſolable; but making an acquaintance with an inn-keeper's daughter in the village, and marrying her ſoon after, he became the gayeſt man alive. By the direction of my new mother, who for unknown reaſons, grew uneaſy at my prying diſpoſition, I was ſentenced to a grammar ſchool at fifty miles diſtance. Mortified as I was at firſt, I began early to reliſh this change of life. A new world was opened to me for diſcovery: I wormed myſelf into the ſecrets of every boy, and made immediate information

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tion to the maſter. Many were the whippings upon theſe occaſions; but as my heart always felt for the miſchiefs of my tongue, I was the firſt to condole with the ſufferer, and eſcaped ſuſpicion by my humanity. But all human enjoyments are tranſitory. It happened in the courſe of my diſcoveries, that by a perverſe boy's denying the fact he was charged with, I was unfortunately called up to give evidence againſt him; and though I delivered it with the ſtricteſt regard to truth, I found the whole ſchool in combination againſt me, and every one branding me with the name of TELL-TALE.

FROM this unlucky accident, hardly a day paſſed, but I was called upon to anſwer facts which I never committed, and was as certainly puniſhed for denying them. I was buffeted and abuſed by every body, and then whipt for quarreling; or if any thing was miſſing in the ſchool, it was conſtantly found in one of my coat pockets, or locked up ſafely in my trunk. During this continued ſtate of perſecution, I wrote repeatedly to my father for leave to return home: but the government of that family was transferred, and admittance to it, even at common vacation times, denyed me. At the end of five years, however, and as you will ſoon be informed, to my utter diſgrace, I obtained the favour of paſſing the chriſtmas holidays at home.

THE morning after my arrival, I perceived at breakfaſt, by the demure looks of the maid, and now and then a ſide wink at her miſtreſs, that there were ſecrets in the family. It was not long before I diſcovered ſome particular familiarities between my mother in law and a ſpruce exciſeman in the neighbourhood. The room I lay in was the next to her's; but unadviſedly attempting a ſmall peep-hole in the wainſcot, I unluckily bored through the face of my father's picture, which hung on the

the other ſide; by which misfortune I underwent the mortification of a diſcovery, and the ſevereſt diſcipline I ever felt. Stung with the reproaches I met with from this adventure, I doubled my aſſiduities, and had the ſatisfaction of diſcovering one afternoon in the garden, that the exciſe-man and my mother were made of the very ſame fleſh and blood with the curate and my aunt. My father happening to be engaged at the next village, I had time to go from houſe to houſe and inform the pariſh of his diſgrace: but how great was my ſurprize, when at my return home, inſtead of gaining credit to my ſtory, my mother had art enough to turn the miſchief upon myſelf, and to get me driven out of doors as the moſt wicked of incendiaries!

ENRAGED as I was at my father's inhumanity, I fell upon my knees in the ſtreet, and made a ſolemn oath never to enter his doors again, whatever miſery might be the conſequence. With this reſolution, and ſomething more than a guinea in my pocket (which I had ſaved from the benefactions of ſome particular friends at my return from ſchool) I took the road, by moon-light, for London. Nothing remarkable occurred to me on the way, till the laſt mile of my journey; when joining company with a very civil gentleman, who was kind enough to conduct me over the fields from Iſlington, and giving him the hiſtory of my life, I found this humane ſtranger ſo touched with my misfortunes, as to offer me a bed at his own houſe, and a ſupply of whatever money I wanted, till proviſion could be made for me. Such unexpected generoſity drew tears from me. I thanked him for his goodneſs; and ſhewing him my guinea, which was yet unbroken, I told him the favour of his houſe would be ſufficient obligation. I was indeed a little ſurpriſed to find at that very inſtant my benefactor's

nefactor's piſtol at my breaſt, and a menace of immediate death, if I refuſed to deliver: but you will imagine, Mr. Fitz-Adam, that I could withold nothing from ſo kind a friend; and obligations being thus mutual between us, he left me to purſue my way with a few halfpence in my pocket.

To particularize my diſtreſſes on my firſt arrival in town, would be to write a volume inſtead of a WORLD. In a ſhort time my inquiſitive talents were taken notice of, and I commenced buſineſs in the poſt of retainer to a bayliff's follower: but forgetting that ſecrecy was neceſſary to my commiſſion, I communicated my errand wherever I was ſent upon the look-out, and gave many a fine gentleman time to eſcape. This employment, though of ſhort duration, got me a natural intereſt among the lawyers; and by the merit of ſcholarſhip, as well as writing a tolerable hand, I ſucceeded in time to the ſmart poſt of clerk to a ſolicitor. But here too it was my misfortune to be a little too unguarded in my diſcoveries: for happening ſometimes to be ſent abroad with bills of coſt for buſineſs never done, and fees never paid, I found it impoſſible to conceal any thing from the clients, and was diſcarded as a betrayer of my maſter's ſecrets. In the courſe of a few years I was obliged to combat neceſſity in the various characters of a poet, a ballad-ſinger, a ſoldier, a tooth-drawer, a mountebank, an actor, and a travelling tutor to a BUCK. In this laſt poſt I might have lived with eaſe and profit, if I could have concealed from my pupil that he was the plague of every country he came to, and the diſgrace of his own. By gradual progreſſion, and having acquired ſome knowledge of French, I roſe in time to be aſſiſtant ſecretary to an envoy abroad. Here it was that my enquiring mind began to be of ſervice to me; but happening in a few months to make diſcovery of certain tranſactions, not much to the honour of my maſter, and being detected in tranſmitting them to my friends in England, I was diſcarded from my office with contempt and beggary. Upon this occaſion my neceſſities hurried me to an act of guilt, that my conſcience will forever upbraid me with: for being thus deſerted in a country where charity was unfaſhionable, and reduced to the very point of ſtarving, I renounced my religion for bread, and became a brother of the Mendicants of St. Francis. Under the ſanctity of this habit, and from the example of the brotherhood, I led a life of profligacy and wantonneſs. But though my conſcience was ſubdued, my tongue retained its freedom: for it was my misfortune one day, through ignorance of my company, to betray the ſecrets of a lady's confeſſion

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